

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 ICA-11
OES-07 HA-05 VO-05 INSE-00 CA-01 EB-08 TRSE-00
/092 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/EE:JHGLENN:MEG
APPROVED BY C:MNIMETZ
C:IWOLF

-----006105 091351Z /46

R 091332Z JUN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 146533

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, CVIS, CGEN, BEXP, EFIN

SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK AMBASSADOR JOHANES' MEETING WITH
THE COUNSELOR

1. CZECHOSLOVAK AMBASSADOR JOHANES, AT HIS REQUEST, MET
WITH THE COUNSELOR ON JUNE 7 TO DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS
BEFORE LEAVING FOR TWO WEEKS OF CONSULTATIONS AND LEAVE
IN PRAGUE. IRA WOLF, C, AND THE CZECHOSLOVAK DESK OFFICER
SAT IN. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION.

2. GENERAL STATE OF RELATIONS. IN RESPONSE TO JOHANES'
STATEMENT THAT HE WANTED TO UNDERSTAND THE OBSTACLES TO
IMPROVED RELATIONS, NIMETZ SAID THAT THE US WANTS TO HAVE
GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL STATES. NO TWO ARE ALIKE, THE
USG APPROACHES THEM ON AN EQUAL BASIS. US/EE RELATIONS
ARE IMPROVING . THERE ARE PROBLEMS, BUT THE USG TRIES TO
RESOLVE THEM, INCLUDING THOSE WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA. EFFORT
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AND GOOD WILL ON BOTH SIDES ARE REQUIRED. OTHER STATES
ARE RESPONSIVE TO US GESTURES, BUT THE US PERCEIVES LITTLE
INTEREST IN PRAGUE IN IMPROVING RELATIONS. CZECHOSLOVAK
MEDIA ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT AND THE COUNTRY, THE GOC'S
HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, ITS TREATMENT OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS,
ITS HANDLING OF THE NORMALIZATION PROGRAM, AND ITS POLICY
ON VISAS FOR FORMER CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS SUCH AS VOSICKY

LEAD TO BAD FEELING AND MAKE PROGRESS IMPOSSIBLE. NIMETZ SAID HE WAS PESSIMISTIC THAT MUCH COULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. PERHAPS IN THE FALL OR EARLY NEXT YEAR, RELATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE US WOULD LIKE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AND WANTS BOTH A CLAIMS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND A CULTURAL EXCHANGES AGREEMENT. THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS FAVORABLE, AS IT HAS BEEN SINCE 1918. THE GOC'S ATTITUDE IS THE PROBLEM.

3. IN RESPONSE, JOHANES SAID THE GOC'S PERCEPTION IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, THAT IT WANTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BUT THE US IS UNWILLING TO. HIS DISCUSSION WITH GEORGE VEST ON JUNE 5 (SEPTTEL) CONVINCED HIM THAT THE US DOES NOT WANT IMPROVED RELATIONS. JOHANES DENIED THAT THE PROBLEMS NIMETZ MENTIONED WERE REALLY OBSTACLES TO IMPROVED RELATIONS. THE GOC IS PROSECUTING DISSIDENTS ONLY WHEN THEY VIOLATE CZECHOSLOVAK LAW. ON THE OTHER HAND, IN SOME COUNTRIES ALLIED TO THE US, PEOPLE ARE SHOT ON THE STREET. THE GOC'S POLICY ON VISAS FOR FORMER CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS HAS GREATLY IMPROVED; ALMOST EVERYONE CAN NOW VISIT CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THE GOC'S MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE US SIMPLY REFLECTS THE US MEDIA'S TREATMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. JOHANES MENTIONED THAT, 1 1/2 YEARS AGO, HE COMPLAINED ABOUT AN ARTICLE IN THE NEW CONFIDENTIAL

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YORK TIMES ATTACKING HUSAK (GAULAITER HUSAK) IN HIS TWO YEARS HERE, HE HAS SEEN NOTHING POSITIVE ABOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE US PRESS. RE HELSINKI, JOHANES SAID THAT THE GOC KNOWS THAT PROBLEMS EXIST IN THE US, BUT THEY DO NOT INFLUENCE THE GOC'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. A FOREIGN POLICY REQUIRING ANOTHER STATE TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEFORE RELATIONS CAN BE IMPROVED IS CHILDISH; THE GOC REJECTS SUCH REQUIREMENTS. OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES WHICH VALUE HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA. WHY NOT THE US? THE GOC DOES WANT A CULTURAL EXCHANGES AGREEMENT WITH THE US, IN ACCORD WITH THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. THE GOC WAS TOLD THAT THE AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE SIGNED BEFORE AUGUST, 1978 DUE TO PUBLIC OPINION, BUT JOHANES WONDERED IF THE ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER ARE ALSO A FACTOR.

4. NIMETZ TOLD JOHANES THAT THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF 1968 IS NOT THE ONLY DIFFICULTY. THE PROBLEM IS THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND ITS HOSTILITY TO THE US AND TO US JOURNALISTS. NIMETZ SAID HE PERSONALLY WOULD-LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO BE ABLE TO BEGIN SPENDING TIME IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

HE REITERATED THAT THERE IS NO IMPEDIMENT ON THE US SIDE TO IMPROVED RELATIONS, CITING HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN ARRANGEMENTS TO RETURN THE CROWN OF ST. STEPHEN TO HUNGARY AND IN NEGOTIATIONS TO EXTEND IT MFN TARIFF STATUS. THE KEY WAS THAT THE USG THOUGHT THAT HUNGARY HAD WORKED OUT PROBLEMS IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY. EVEN BULGARIA AND EAST GERMANY HAVE FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE US. CZECHOSLOVAKIA COULD, TOO. RELATIONS CANNOT BECOME MUCH WORSE.

5. PAVEL VOSICKY CASE. NIMETZ RAISED VOSICKY'S CASE AS AN EXAMPLE OF GOC ACTIONS WHICH HARM RELATIONS. NIMETZ EXPLAINED THAT VOSICKY WANTS TO VISIT HIS DYING MOTHER BUT
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HAS BEEN UNABLE RECENTLY TO OBTAIN A VISA. THE GOC, ON HUMANITARIAN IF NO OTHER GROUNDS, COULD HAVE GIVEN VOSICKY A VISA. ITS REFUSAL HAS PRODUCED A MARKEDLY NEGATIVE REACTION IN THE USG WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS.

6. CLAIMS/GOLD. JOHANES SAID THE GOC IS EAGER FOR A SETTLEMENT; AMERICAN CLAIMANTS NEED THE REMAINDER OF THEIR COMPENSATION. HE SAID THE GOC THOUGHT THE 1974 AGREEMENT WAS A GOOD ONE; EVEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID SO UNTIL RECENTLY. THE 1974 AGREEMENT PROVIDED FOR ROUGHLY THE SAME PERCENTAGE SETTLEMENT AS THOSE THE USG HAS NEGOTIATED WITH OTHER EE STATES. JOHANES STRESSED THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE DO NOT ACCEPT THE USG'S REFUSAL TO RELEASE THE GOLD AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN WHY THE USG REFUSES WHEN FRANCE AND BRITAIN HAVE AGREED TO DO SO. JOHANES NOTED THAT THE UK AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA DO NOT YET HAVE A CLAIMS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT YET THERE IS NO DISPUTE OVER THE GOLD. ALTHOUGH IT DISLIKED THE IDEA, THE GOC AGREED IN 1974 TO THE USG'S DESIRE TO LINK THE ISSUES. JOHANES EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOC REGARDS THIS ISSUE AS MOST IMPORTANT. UNTIL IT IS RESOLVED, IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

7. NIMETZ RESPONDED THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S ATTITUDE TO THE 1974 AGREEMENT IS ACADEMIC; THE CONGRESS REQUIRES RENEGOTIATION AND ANY AGREEMENT MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE CONGRESS. THIS WILL TAKE SOME TIME. THE USG IS WORKING ON ITS POSITION. CLEARLY, THE 1974 AGREEMENT IS NO LONGER ADEQUATE. THE PRICE OF GOLD HAS INCREASED, AND THE DOLLAR HAS DEPRECIATED. THE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER EE STATES WERE NEGOTIATED YEARS AGO. THE SETTLEMENTS WERE WORTH MUCH MORE THEN. THE GOC LOSES
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NOTHING ON THE GOLD. THE AMERICAN CLAIMANTS LOST THEIR PROPERTIES AND DESERVE

COMPENSATION. NIMETZ ASKED IF THE GOC WANTS TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE. JOHANES SAID YES, THAT AMBASSADOR BYRNE HAD SAID HE WOULD RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA LAST YEAR WITH A NEW PROPOSAL BUT HAD MADE ONLY A VAGUE STATEMENT ABOUT THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION. NIMETZ REITERATED THAT THE USG DOES NOT YET HAVE A POSITION.

8. ACCESS. JOHANES COMPLAINED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO SEE HIM THIS WEEK DESPITE HIS PROMISE TO FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK IN NEW YORK LAST WEEK THAT HE WOULD DO SO. JOHANES ALSO COMPLAINED THAT BOTH BLUMENTHAL AND KREPS HAVE REFUSED TO SEE HIM. HE CONTRASTED THEIR REFUSAL TO THE WILLINGNESS OF SENIOR GOC OFFICIALS TO MEET WITH AMBASSADOR BYRNE AT HIS PLEASURE. JOHANES SAID THERE SEEMED TO BE MORE OPPORTUNITIES IN PRAGUE THAN IN WASHINGTON FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH USG OFFICIALS AND WONDERED WHETHER ANTI-GOC ATTITUDES WERE NOT BEING CREATED HERE. NIMETZ INFORMED JOHANES THAT THE SECRETARY IS EXTREMELY BUSY AND CANNOT MEET WITH MOST AMBASSADORS. NIMETZ ADDED THAT, EVEN WHEN ARRANGEMENTS TO RETURN THE CROWN TO HUNGARY WERE UNDERWAY, THE SECRETARY HAD BEEN ABLE TO MEET ONLY ONCE WITH THE HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR. NIMETZ SAID JOHANES SHOULD NOT TAKE THE SECRETARY'S INABILITY TO MEET WITH HIM AS A SLIGHT. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMBASSADORS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE146533
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JHGLENN:MEG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780241-0880
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780675/aaaacmqc.tel
Line Count: 202
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 96c7428c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2412679
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CZECHOSLOVAK AMBASSADOR JOHANES' MEETING WITH THE COUNSELOR
TAGS: SHUM, CVIS, CGEN, BEXP, EFIN, (JOHANES, JAROMIR), (NIMETZ, MARTIN)
To: PRAGUE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96c7428c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014